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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 002588

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR A/S FRIED AND EUR/WE
NSC FOR HADLEY

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MOD BONO

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador held a successful first meeting on July 6 with Minister of Defense Jose Bono and CHOD General Felix Sanz. Bono thanked the Ambassador for the USG's warm reception during his visit to the U.S. in early May, particularly during his productive meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld. Bono said he hoped the Ambassador's

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arrival would help further the excellent U.S.-Spain defense relationship. He cited the USG's unimpeded access to the bases at Rota and Moron as symbols of Spain's commitment to cooperate with the USG. Bono discussed the upcoming deployment of Spanish forces to Afghanistan and requested USG airlift support for this deployment in the form of four USAF C-17s. He expressed appreciation for the USG's confidence in authorizing the transfer of Tomahawk missile technology to Spain. The Ambassador asked about the status of the S-80 submarine weapons system contract. Bono said that Spain had made a decision "favorable to a U.S. company," but said he would not announce this decision immediately so that it would not appear to be a quid pro quo for the Tomahawks. The Ambassador pressed Bono on the Venezuela weapons sale, making clear that this was still an issue of contention for the USG. Bono insisted that the naval vessels and aircraft would be non-offensive and would probably not be delivered for another six years, during which time Bono expected Chavez would leave the scene. Further, Bono said that if Spain found that Venezuela were "pursuing a path against the principles of democracy," the GOS would not sell the vessels to Venezuela. End Summary.

2. (C) The Ambassador met with Bono at the Ministry of Defense, accompanied by DCM, Political Counselor Kathy Fitzpatrick, DATT Captain Kevin Little, and ODC commander Captain Carlos Sotomayor. Bono was accompanied by CHOD General Sanz, Secretary General for Defense Policy Admiral Francisco Torrente, Army Chief of Staff General Jose Antonio Garcia Gonzalez, and MOD Chief of Staff Miguel Fernandez Palacios Martinez. Bono said he was very appreciative of the USG's warm reception during his early May visit to the U.S., which he viewed as a clear signal that U.S.-Spain defense relations could not be better. He was especially pleased with his meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld. With the Ambassador's arrival, Bono said he hoped the excellent relations would continue at the same level.

//BILATERAL ISSUES - CUBA, 3U COMMERCIAL DISPUTE//

3. (C) Bono expressed interest in the Ambassador's Cuban ancestry. The Ambassador shared his experiences growing up in Cuba and as an immigrant to the U.S. He said Cuba was clearly an important issue for the U.S. and Spain, but only one of many that he would deal with during his tenure in Madrid. The Ambassador noted that the most important point on Cuba was that both the U.S. and Spain believed in a free Cuba that would promote democratic values in the region. He cited the USG's disagreement with Spain's move to block EU invitations to national day events, saying that while it appeared to be a minor issue, it sent the wrong message and demoralized the opposition.

4. (C) Bono raised the issue of the U.S. commercial vessel, the "3U." He said the MFA had requested that the MOD be prepared to board the 3U since it was conducting operations in Spanish waters in disregard of Spanish sovereignty. DCM explained that there was a discrepancy between the USG and GOS views on this issue, since we believed the 3U was operating appropriately as a commercial vessel, while the MFA insisted it was a scientific vessel and required GOS authorization in order to proceed with its plans to lay cable through Spanish waters. DCM said that the USG had duly requested authorization for the 3U through a note verbale, but that the issue remained in dispute. Bono made clear his desire that this issue not become a problem in bilateral defense relations.

//BONO - SPAIN COMMITTED TO DEFENSE COOPERATION//

5. (C) Bono described the USG's unimpeded access to the Spanish navy base at Rota and the air base at Moron as indications of Spain's commitment to defense cooperation, saying the USG essentially could essentially operate from

both bases as if they were its own. Bono raised the issue of stalled USAFE-Spanish Air Force discussions on Spain's desire to use some Moron air base ramp space to park its Eurofighter aircraft, on the understanding that the Spanish aircraft would vacate the space if the U.S. needed full capacity for any contingency. The Ambassador said he was aware of the problem and would travel to Moron the next day to see it for himself. He said the issue would be dealt with through appropriate channels.

16. (C) Bono discussed the upcoming deployment of Spanish troops to Afghanistan to co-lead the Herat FSB, lead a PRT in western Afghanistan, and provide additional security for the parliamentary elections in the fall. Bono said it would be useful if the USG could provide airlift in the form of four C-17 aircraft to help transport Spanish forces to the region. He said media coverage of such assistance would be an opportunity to showcase the high level of U.S.-Spain defense cooperation. The Ambassador said we appreciated the value of promoting such cooperation and would convey his request to the Department of Defense.

//THANKS FOR THE TOMAHAWKS, STILL NO S-80 ANNOUNCEMENT//

17. (C) Minister Bono said he had received a letter from Secretary Rumsfeld authorizing the transfer of Tomahawk

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missile technology to Spain. The Ambassador said Spain should be proud of that honor, since we had only shared that technology with two other allies, the UK and The Netherlands. Bono said he understood this and appreciated the USG's confidence in Spain.

18. (C) The Ambassador asked about the status of the S-80 submarine weapons system contract, in which two U.S. firms are competing with French and German companies. Bono responded that Spain had essentially made the decision already and that it would be favorable to a U.S. company. However, Bono claimed that he wanted to put some distance between the Tomahawk decision and the Spanish decision on the S-80 so that the two issues would not appear linked. Also, Bono said he planned to attend the Bastille Day parade in Paris on July 14 and did not want to disappoint the French government, which has pushed hard in support of a French company on the S-80 contract, before that event.

//VENEZUELA//

19. (C) The Ambassador raised Spanish arms sales to Venezuela, noting that we understood that Spain had already made the commitment to transfer the vessels to Venezuela, but that the USG did not share the Zapatero government's apparent faith in the Chavez regime to use the weapons for non-offensive use. Bono said that he had discussed this issue with Secretary Rumsfeld, noting in that conversation that several countries sold weapons to Venezuela, including the U.S. Bono asserted that he had explained the Venezuela arms sale in detail and believed he had satisfied Secretary Rumsfeld's concerns. The Ambassador said that, notwithstanding Bono's conversation with Secretary Rumsfeld, there was still deep concern regarding this issue at the highest levels of the USG. Bono said that the media had mischaracterized the nature of the items being sold to Venezuela, insisting that they would be non-offensive transport aircraft and coastal patrol vessels. The Ambassador said the USG would look very skeptically on any transfer of USG technology to Venezuela as part of this sale. Bono responded that since the vessels would be built as coastal patrol ships and not as military vessels, the would not carry any U.S. technology of concern.

10. (C) On Venezuela's political direction and possible role in undermining regional stability, Bono asserted that Spain had the same fundamental concerns as the USG. He said that if Spain determined that the Chavez government was "pursuing a path that is against the principle of democracy that both the U.S. and Spain share," the GOS would not sell the weapons to Venezuela. Bono said that the actual transfer of the weapons would not take place for six years and he speculated that it was highly unlikely that Chavez would still be in power by that time.

AGUIRRE